

WEBSITE ANNOUNCEMENT FOR OFFENDERS VISITORS

Texas Department of Criminal Justice *Offender Visitation Plan*

SUMMARY OF REVISIONS Effective March 1, 2014

The following are changes to the Visitation Plan effective March 1, 2014. It is anticipated that additional changes will be made after the agency reviews responses to the *TDCJ Offender Visitation Survey*.

DEFINITION

- The definition of Hardship Visitors was revised to clarify that an offender who is a legal guardian is allowed to visit their children ages 16 and 17, in the same manner as offender-parents are allowed to visit their children ages 16 and 17.
- The definition of Immediate Family was revised to include nieces and nephews.
- A definition for Victims of Family Violence was added which allows victims of family violence who have been issued a card that indicates the individual has been certified as a crime victim to use a post office box in lieu of a physical address. The attorney general is authorized under Texas Code of Criminal Procedure § 56.82 to protect the address information of victims of family violence.
- The definition of Visitor Identification added that at least one of the identification documents used to determine identity must contain a current physical address, with the exception of victims of family violence who have been certified by the attorney general to have address protection.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

- Language was added to state that a volunteer must notify the unit volunteer authority or Volunteer Services department when the volunteer is the immediate family member or have a pre-existing relationship with an offender.
- The frequency of visits was revised to allow all eligible J2 offenders one contact visit per week.
- The frequency of visits was revised to allow all Level 2, Level 3 and Protective Custody Level 1 offenders with a time earning status of SAT 3, one contact visit per week; this includes G2, G3, P2, P3 and 4A custody designations.
- Language was removed indicating visitors arriving more than 15 minutes late for a visit may not be allowed to visit; unit administration shall make every effort to accommodate visitors who arrive late, if time and space is available.

- Language was added clarifying that the duty warden has the authority to make the final determination whether an ex-offender is allowed or not allowed to visit an offender based on safety and security concerns.
- Included children under 18 shall not be pat searched, but screened by TDCJ security staff using a handheld or walk-through metal detector.
- Parents, guardians, or accompanying adults were included as the parties responsible for ensuring visiting children are free of any contraband prior to entering a TDCJ unit.
- Revised language to state how individuals on TDCJ property who are licensed to carry a handgun under Texas Government Code Chapter 411, Subchapter H shall secure their unloaded gun in a:
 - Locked weapons box in a locked vehicle;
 - Locked compartment of a locked vehicle;
 - Trunk of a locked vehicle with a locking device attached to the firearm; or
 - Locked vehicle with the firearm concealed from view and a locking device attached to the firearm.
- Clarified procedures to state visitors shall be denied permission to visit and may have their name removed from the offender's Visitors List, if the visitor misrepresents their relationship with an offender.
- Knives, drugs and medications were added to the list of contraband items not allowed inside the secured perimeter of a unit.
- The amount of coin money a visitor may bring was increased from \$20 to \$25.
- Language was added to state conservative dress is encouraged for all visitors.
- Modified visitors' dress code:
 - Sandals, flip-flops, and open-toe shoes were included as acceptable footwear.
 - Sleeveless shirts and dresses that cover the shoulders were identified as permissible attire.
 - Shorts no shorter than three inches above the middle of the knee while standing were identified as permissible attire.
 - Length is not restricted for pre-adolescent boys and girls, generally children 10 years old and younger.

- Clarified information to state that while state jail offenders shall have completed the intake process and be incarcerated in the TDCJ for a minimum of 30 days before becoming eligible for contact visits, general visits are allowed at any point as specified by the warden.
- Included text encouraging visitors to call the unit to verify arrangements for a special extended visit; however, the duty warden shall make every effort to allow special extended visits if time and space allow.
- Procedures were clarified regarding visitation with Hospice offenders to indicate offenders in the Hospice Program, and offenders diagnosed as terminally ill who receive only palliative (comfort) care, are allowed to receive visits seven days a week between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., within the infirmary setting.